

W r e s t l i n g

P e r s p e c t i v e

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Ron Simmons: Using The Basics To Go For The Gold

By - David Skolnick

"We've Got Ron Simmons, what a great athlete he is. He's never been truly put into a position to carry a load. Hell, with his background and athletic ability, you've got to take people like that and put them in a position to test them. See if they can come to the front."

- Bill Watts in the May 21, 1992 issue of Pro Wrestling Torch

Don't be too surprised to see Ron Simmons crowned as WCW's heavyweight champion in the near future. At the very least, Simmons will make a strong run for the gold.

Simmons has had the support of Dusty Rhodes for the past year, although at times, his push wasn't very strong. Nevertheless, the best program WCW had last year was Simmons vs. Lex Luger. It was in that program Simmons showed that he was a believable top contender and serious athlete. That Halloween Havoc match was the most emotionally intense and athletic-looking bout the company presented in 1991.

Unlike the recent rush jobs the company has done to promote their top contenders, a lot of effort was put forward to give Simmons the proper push. The company took the time to do a series of videos of Simmons at his alma mater, Florida State University. The videos showed Simmons returning to his roots. The company also scored a coup when they spoke to the school's football coach, Bobby Bowdren. At the time, the university was the top ranked college football team in the country. The other videos of Simmons showed him spending time with young Atlanta kids, giving them advice about life. These videos portrayed Simmons as a strong babyface as he attempted to give something back to his fans. If the company invested that much time with every top contender, it might not be in the position it is in right now.

When the time came for the Havoc match, fans really believed Simmons had a strong chance to defeat Luger. For many, reality was suspended during that bout. The two out of three falls match, with Harley Race in Luger's corner and Rhodes in Simmons' corner, is something WCW should have used as a starting point, not a finishing one. But, with Watts back at the helm, that style of match may make a comeback.

Simmons is Watt's kind of wrestlers - strong, athletic, a good brawler and a solid worker. Look at what Watts did in the UWF and is now doing in WCW with Steve Williams and Terry Gordy. Apparently, Watts sees similar possibilities with Simmons. Judging from Watts' comments in the Torch, Watts was to see what Simmons can do. Based on fan reaction, Simmons is passing with flying colors.

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Watts has put him against Super Invader, certainly not one of WCW's finest, to see if Simmons can "carry a load" as well as carry a poor worker. The televised angles prove Simmons can be the focal point of an important feud and perhaps, eventually he will be the focal point of the entire promotion. The one objection some fans have to the feud is the racial undertones. Like Simmons told Race during a recent Clash, this is the nineties. Fans agree and don't want to see outdated racist angles.

Regardless of the racism involved the Invader feud, Simmons is showing maturity and improvement. He's come a long way from his early days in Florida. After joining the NWA/WCW, Simmons slowly worked his way up the ranks. He turned against the Junkyard Dog three years ago and worked a short time as the Iron Sheik's tag team partner. Simmons then donned a mask and formed Doom with Butch Reed. The team got off to a decent start, but quickly fizzled. Doom did countless jobs and scored zero points during the Iron Team Tournament at Starrcade '89. It wasn't until after they lost the masks in a match against the Steiners, that the company decided to do something with them. Managed by Theodore R. Long, Doom won the tag team belts on May 19, 1990. The same year, Simmons finished a close second to Kenta Kobashi in the *Wrestling Observer Newsletter's* readers poll, while Doom finished fifth for tag team of the year. On February 24, 1991, after a long and successful reign, the team lost the straps to the Freebirds and subsequently split up. Although WCW was breaking up one of its best teams, Simmons was finally given a well-deserved push as a top singles wrestler.

With the recent focus on mat wrestling and athletic contests, there is no doubt that Simmons could make a believable heavyweight champion. With him as the top single's wrestler and the Steiners and Williams and Gordy battling it out for the company's top tag team spot, WCW may finally have its own identity. The promotion may no longer be seen as a WWF clone. WCW may be seen as an alternative to the cartoon-like atmosphere of the WWF. For the past few years, the company has abandoned its hardcore audience in attempts to attract more children. It appears that WCW management has realized that effort has failed miserably. Gearing the promotion towards serious fans by pushing serious athletes such as Simmons wrestling serious looking matches may be the company's only chance to succeed.

Sidelines

Thanks To Wade Keller, Sheldon Goldberg and Georgiann Makropolous for the plugs. The support is most welcome and appreciated.

Pro Wrestling Sushi without a doubt was one of the funniest and most entertaining newsletter we ever had the pleasure of reading. Regretably, we are using the past tense in that statement as Jeff Mullins as decided to take Sushi to that great newsletter retirement home in the Smoky Mountains. However, Jeff is selling back issues of Sushi for \$1.50 per issue. Plus if you order four issues, you will receive a fifth issue free. If you never tried Sushi, we highly recommend you sample several of Jeff's 44 issues. They are a piece of Wrestling newsletter history every fan should have in their collection. Pro Wrestling Sushi is available from Jeff Mullins at PO Box 36189, San Jose, CA 95158, but not for long, so order your collection of wrestling's funniest newsletter today.

Wade Keller has done it again. Just when you thought he was too busy with Pro Wrestling Torch (one of the top weekly newsletters on the market available for \$1.25 per issue) he turns around and starts a monthly newsletter called The Ring Post. At 75¢ per issue, this is one of the best bargains on the market, featuring commentary and numerous subjects in professional wrestling from a variety of writers. Wade hopes to expand The Ring Post in the future and the first issue looks very promising. Both Pro Wrestling Torch and The Ring Post are definitely worth a look and are available from Wade Keller at PO Box 201844, Minneapolis, MN 55420.

Elise McKeown Skolnick has photos for sale of wrestlers including: Cactus Jack, Rick Rude, Ric Flair and Buddy Rogers. For a list, send a SASE to: Elise McKeown Skolnick, 221 Stowe Avenue, Apartment A-1, Troy, NY 12180.

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Smoky Mountain Wrestling: A Blast From The Past

By · Tim Whitehead

Hardcore fans throughout the country have been hoping for a return to the regional wrestling circuits which once blanketed the national landscape. Ever since the national expansion of the mid-eighties destroyed most of the old territories, many have hoped that localized wrestling would someday return. As recently as a decade ago, regional wrestling circuits covered America, providing fans with a local promotion they could call their own. These promotions held cards regularly in all the major cities in the area, usually on a weekly or biweekly schedule. Fans could count on wrestling at their local arenas every other Friday night, for example. Regional promotions also held cards in even the smallest towns in the territory. High school gymnasiums and local recreations centers became exciting places to be as the wrestlers on television came home. Localized interview segments added still more heat, firing up the fans to come out and see the action live and in person. By the end of 1991, however, only two of the old territories survived: USWA in Memphis and the barely-breathing Pacific Northwest federation in Portland.

A few months ago, a new regional group arose. Smoky Mountain Wrestling (SMW) began promoting live cards in parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia and the Carolinas. Unlike other small independent

promotions using grandiose names - Global Wrestling Federation and International World Class Championship Wrestling for example - SMW doesn't pretend to hold cards all over the world, or even to have an office in Barcelona. Rather, it aims at the local market in the immediate Smoky Mountain area. When tournaments were held to crown the first singles and tag team champions, the belts were dubbed the SMW Tittle and the SMW Tag Team titles. No one spoke of World or Intercontinental or International titles. The belts were promoted as being of, by, and for the fans of the specific region covered by the promotion.

Jim Cornette and former NWA official Sandy Scott are among the movers and shakers behind SMW. It has never been a secret that Cornette is a wrestling traditionalist who dislikes the cartoon atmosphere that permeates much of the national wrestling seen on televisions today. He recently moved from Charlotte to Knoxville, make it clear that for him, SMW is a labor love, something which definitely comes through when watching his interviews on SMW broadcasts.

SMW's television show is a classic back to the basics operation. It's filmed in small high school gyms, with fans sitting on bleachers and the home team's logo clearly visible on the wall in the background. Former Mid-Atlantic commentator, Bob Caudle, is the host. Though Caudle has been criticized in the past for being repetitive and using too many cliches, he comes across well playing off of heel color commentator Dutch Mantell. Even the SMW logo, a map of the six state region covered by the promotion, brings back memories. It features five of the six states that were on Mid-Atlantic's old logo with Kentucky being substituted for Georgia.

Naturally, SMW doesn't have the deep talent roster of one of the big national promotions, but there are still plenty of fine competitors. Paul Orndorf, Stan Lane, Tom Pritchard, Robert Gibson, Tim Horner, Buddy Landell, Brian Lee, Dirty White Boy, Jimmy Golden and the Fultons are among SMW's top stars. While it would be an exaggeration to say that the quality of the wrestling is excellent, it's as good or better than all but the most exceptional WWF match, and far more entertaining. Also, SMW has two of the top three managers in the sport in Jim Cornette and Ron Wright (WCW's Paul E. Dangerously being the third).

SMW is now running a regular circuit of house shows in a territory stretching from Knoxville up to Beckley, West Virginia and all points in between. Many of the small towns, such as Sneedville, Tennessee and Tazewell, Virginia. hadn't seen live professional wrestling in years until SMW came to town. Localized interviews are used to promote the house shows, and it really adds a tinge of excitement to hears one's own home town being discussed on the television promos for an upcoming card. Phil Rainey, a Knoxville sportscaster, who was co-host of the classic Southeastern Championship Wrestling show more than a decade ago, conduct the local promos. In classic tradition, the babyfaces praise the town and its citizens, while the heels sneer. On a recent build up for a card in Saltville, Virginia, Lane sarcastically announced that he thought the card was in Pepperbrough, while Cornette said Saltville was a redneck slime-pit, adding that it was a good place to annihilate the Fultons, since it was so small there wouldn't be any witnesses to report them to the police. These brief localized promos add incredible heat to the house shows, and they can't help but sell additional ticket.

It's still to early to tell if SMW is the beginning of trend or the last gasp of a lost cause. If a promotion as good as this one can't survive, then it may be the time to throw in the towel and concede that the regional circuit have gone the way of the buggy whip. But, if SMW succeeds, look for similar groups to begin sprouting all over the country within a couple of years. Already, SMW tapes are hot commodities among tape traders. Hopefully, the casual fans in the Smoky Mountain area area as enthusiastic about SMW as the hardcores. If so, SMW will thrive.

Ric Flair... The Best Ever?

By - Rodney Leighton

Ric Flair is considered by many hardcore fans as the best wrestler ever. To many, he's almost a God. Indeed, many years ago, Jim Ross and various other NWA announcers started to constantly promote Flair as the best and greatest NWA champion of all time. Well, there is no accounting for the tastes of hardcores, especially for those who have never seen any NWA champion except Flair. As for the announcers, they were only doing their jobs. Once in awhile, I would get disgusted or angry at such talk, but usually I would just smile.

I have been watching pro wrestling for longer than my editors and many other hardcore folks have been alive. That doesn't mean much, other than the fact that I am passing middle age, and I have been fortunate enough to see many NWA champions. I have been lucky enough to have seen Gene Kiniski, Dory Funk Jr., Jack Brisco, Harley Race and Flair live. Additionally, I saw Terry Funk, Whipper Billy Watson and Lou Thesz on television when they were in their prime. Resultantly, I have a bit of an idea who was great and was the best at what.

For the record, let me state that Flair was, and in many ways, still is a great wrestler. But, let's look at the various aspects of being a great wrestler, the best wrestler.

Wrestling Skill: As far as wrestling holds, maneuvers and scientific action, Flair is considerably down the list. However, when limited to champions I have personally seen, he would be fourth, behind Thesz, Dory Funk and Brisco.

Brawling ability: Flair is a great brawler, there is no question about that. Terry Funk was better. So was Kiniski in his prime.

Interviews: An important ingredient, especially in the later years. No one gives a better interview than Terry Funk, but Flair is so close to him that it makes no difference.

Begging: Flair wins this one easily. There has never been and never will be a wrestler better at begging for mercy. While I realize it's part of his selling, I personally feel he went overboard with it.

Selling: I don't believe there has ever been a better champion at selling than Flair. Comments such as "Flair could carry a broom to a three star match" and such are patently ridiculous. Flair was one half of the second best match I ever saw live. I also saw him in a match which I rated a star and a half, with the half star going to Woman. I have seen some matches which Flair turned into a good match, and other which look foolish: picture Flair begging for mercy from Lee Scott.

Winning matches cleanly: Yes, I know these are booking decisions. However, don't forget that Flair books his own matches a lot of the time. Never has there been a champion who won the title and then didn't win a match for six or seven months. While Brisco became the best champion at saving his title by throwing his opponent over the top rope, Flair was easily the best at retaining his title via a screw job finish. Run-ins, outside

interference and any other method, except actually pinning the guy, were trademarks of Flair's championships. To me, this detracted greatly from his very real abilities and greatness and dimmed his luster. While Ross and company proclaimed him the best ever, the constant interference rapidly destroyed any claim to legendary status he so rightfully should have claimed.

Is Flair the best wrestler in his current promotion? Without a doubt. There are a few who are slightly better in some areas, no one can out sell Curt Hennig, Shawn Michaels is a better athlete, Bret Hart a better scientific wrestler. Flair however, is easily the best composite WWF wrestler.

Is Ric Flair the best NWA champion ever? No. Number three in my book, behind the Funk brothers. Does this mean anything today? Well, is Flair the best of his decade. Obviously not. There were a about five years in the eighties when Flair was the best wrestler in North America, if not the world. If one breaks the various components of being a pro wrestler into segments and looks at all wrestlers, from all ages, Flair would range from the very best to about number 15. I can think of 14 better scientific wrestlers. Taking a look at the composite wrestler, and ignoring the very real differences in styles, concepts and demands of the different eras, among wrestlers, not just champions, I place Flair about tenth. That is by no means a small achievement. Consider the number of wrestlers who have worked on this continent over the years.

Strut That Strut Like No One Else

By - The Phantom Of The Ring

One of the men who shaped wrestling as we know it passed away. When Buddy Rogers died, a piece of the game died with him.

When he began his wrestling career in 1939, he hardly seemed the type to influence the game. He was just plain Dutch Rhode, and he lost his first match rather unspectacularly, considering that he debuted in his hometown of Camden, NJ and one is usually allowed a draw at worst in his hometown. He was then known under his given moniker of Herman Rhode and he got into wrestling as a way to supplement his pay from the Camden police force. The name "Dutch" sounded good to Ernie Dusek, who in turn, pinned it on Herman. It was a good, clean-sounding name. Dusek also advised young Rhode to stick with the force, and Dutch intended to do just that. He liked police work; in fact, he would maintain a lifelong interest. But, Rhode also liked show business. He was hooked on wrestling, and after a few years in New Jersey and Pennsylvania as the opening match victim, he set out to make his fortune elsewhere.

Elsewhere turned out to be Texas, where he fell under the influence of Morris Siegel. Siegel didn't see much, but with a little polishing, his natural athletic ability would help him get by. The first thing to go was the name "Dutch Rhode" as it was much to ethnic considering his potential. So, he became "Buddy Rogers," a name that sounded enough like "Buck Rogers," the star of 1940s comics, books and serials, but not enough to be sued for copyright infringement. Buddy also came under the influence of "Dirty" Dick Raines, one of the great Texas heel wrestlers of the forties. Raines was known as the inventor of the over-the-knee backbreaker, a hold which

won him much hatred and box office. Raines was also one of the first wrestlers to be an out and out heel. Sure, they hated him, but they kept coming week after week to see him get his. Raines taught him how to work a crowd, a skill that would serve him well later.

Again, he only went so far in Texas. He didn't have that special something to be on top and change of venue was in order. So, Rogers went to Columbus, Ohio and Al Haft Promotions. A new thing called television made its debut around that time and wrestling got on the tube because nothing else was available. Unaccountably, it was a hit. But, it created one problem in that more and more wrestlers were needed to satisfy the public's thirst for this combination of athletics and theater. What was needed most were heels. Rogers dyed his hair blonde in imitation of Gorgeous George and was put on the tube. Still, in the early years he went nowhere. In fact, he was cannon fodder selected to put Two Ton Tony Galento, the ex-boxer, over in his mat debut in 1947. About the only thing he accomplished during this period was to meet and marry female grappler Ellen "The Sizzling Sweede" Olsen. Olsen was a former nightclub dancer from Philadelphia who enlisted in Mildred Burke's and Billy Wolfe's training school in Columbus. It may have been a form of homesickness that drew them together, for the marriage only lasted a few years.

Haft was losing his top star, Frank Sexton, to the Bowser/Tillet group in Boston and needed a new draw. Haft noticed that Rogers was doing extremely well and was gaining a large following on television. Rogers would also do something a lot of other wrestlers couldn't - an interview. He still needed a gimmick to get all the way over and Jack Pfeffer dreamed up the Nature Boy, dressing Rogers in a Tarzan-style outfit, giving him forearm covers and a valet to match. Rogers soon dispensed with the valet, but the new outfit, and nickname, combined with an arrogant strut, especially when he felt he had the upper hand in his match, made him the hit of the Dumont Network.

Rogers was the first wrestler to develop a heel persona. His strut, combined with his bleached blonde hair and cowardly demeanor when the opponent had the upper hand (he was the first to start begging when the babyface got fed up and made his comeback), made him the guy they loved to hate. He also ditched his finishing hold, the piledriver, for the figure-four leglock. He first applied the hold with his arms, but during a match with Billy Darnell, Rogers locked on the figure four only to see Darnell twitch. That twitch of Darnell's powerful legs broke Rogers' forearm. The Nature Boy then came up with a variation on the old grapevine hold by combining it with the figure four leglock to become the figure four grapevine (most holds applied with the legs were known as grapevines). Rogers was also the first heel to score big with female fans. Though Gorgeous George also sported blonde hair, George was too effeminate for the ladies. Rogers exuded machismo, which made the men hate him all the more. He would even allude to this in interviews when he warned the men to keep a tight hold on their women, especially when they saw what a real man (Rogers) looked like.

His popularity peaked at the time when wrestling overstayed its welcome on television. Yet, Rogers wasn't affected: they still came out in droves to see him. He forged a promotional alliance with Vince McMahon Sr. which allowed him to tour the east, where he supplanted Antonio Rocca as the matinee idol. With wrestling's popularity on the decline, and Pat O'Connor struggling as champ, McMahon put forth Rogers as the next NWA champion. He defeated O'Connor in a two-out-of-three fall match on June 30, 1961 at Comiskey Park, Chicago, before a record 38,622 fans. Rogers won the deciding fall when O'Connor missed a tackle and stunned himself against the ring post, which allowed Rogers an easy pin and the belt. Rogers celebrated by telling the crowd

that it couldn't have happened to a nicer guy, then proceeded to strut around the ring as his manager, Bobby Davis, pointed to the belt. He was finally on top.

However kind the gods were to allow him to be champion, they would turn their back on him once he had the belt. Rogers' reign as champion was one of the rockiest and most controversial in wrestling history. McMahon regarded Rogers as his champion and refused the other NWA promotes good dates. Although Toots Mondt is given credit for making Rogers the champion, the fact of the matter is that by this time, Mondt was a junior partner to McMahon, who brilliantly overthrew Mondt as lead promoter in 1956. In 1962, two bizarre events nearly knocked Rogers out as champion and increased the stress that would lead to later health problems. The first occurred in Columbus, when Karl Gotch and Bill Miller teamed to break Rogers' hand in a dressing room melee. Though the facts may never be known, speculation had it that Gotch was jealous of Rogers, who in addition to being champion, was also doing the booking for Haft's crew. Gotch may have felt that he should have been doing the booking, and challenged Rogers to a fight. Rogers, who had no intention of getting in the ring with Gotch (who had a well-deserved reputation for hooking his opponents), declined rudely and started to leave the dressing room. Before he could make the door, Miller, Gotch's protege, slammed the door on Rogers' hand.

The second incident happened in Montreal at the hands of Killer Kowalski. Kowalski, a top-notch if not overly enthusiastic worker, "broke" Rogers' ankle during the first minutes of their match and pinned Rogers for the first fall. Obviously, Rogers' couldn't continue the match and it was awarded to Kowalski. Because Kowalski was not supposed to win, a hasty excuse was drawn up as to why the Killer did not win the belt. As the match was only one fall and Rogers' could only lose the title in a two-out-of-three fall match, Kowalski's win was invalid. Kowalski did, however, take over Rogers' scheduled bookings. The truth of the matter was that the ankle break was one of the all time great works. Rogers had been scheduled to drop the strap to Lou Thesz the next day and made up the ankle break as a convenient excuse. No matter, for time was rapidly running out on the champ.

The clock finally ran out for Rogers in early 1963. He'd been avoiding a match with Thesz until then. Thesz, who had been in semi-retirement since 1962, was brought out at the behest of the NWA promotes to retake the belt. The other promoters were fed up with McMahon's creative booking schedule: McMahon even used the excuse that Rogers' was needed in tag matches and that was why he couldn't send him out.

There are three versions of how Rogers dropped the belt (only three?): One, he was finally told by Muchnick that unless he dropped the strap to Thesz, Rogers would forfeit his \$25,000 bond that he posted against the belt. Two, Rogers was told in the lockerroom that he was to drop the belt to Thesz, otherwise Thesz would shoot the match. Three, Rogers knew he had to drop the belt and told Muchnick he would be glad to do so because his heart, which had always bothered him, was acting up and he was feeling the effects of a champion's stress.

Concerning the three versions, the first one makes no sense. Rogers would not have bought that bluff, and the fact that Muchnick had to go to such great lengths over the Kowalski match just a few months before made it a virtual certainty that he would not go to such lengths again if he could avoid it. The second version is the most creative and the version I would tell if I was Thesz. However, Rogers knew for months that he was to drop the strap to Thesz, so that cancels version two. The third is the most plausible, since Rogers had recently admitted on Tom Burke's talk show that he had told McMahon that doctors were urging him to retire due to his heart condition. That, plus the fact that Rogers did indeed suffer a mild heart attack a few weeks after dropping the strap make this version the most convincing.

This change of champions led to McMahon breaking from the NWA and creating the WWF. Unfortunately his champion was laid up in the hospital, so a change of champions was needed. The heir apparent was Bruno Sammartino, a popular yet difficult wrestler. He was difficult in the sense that he knew his worth and was not afraid to get it. To make the change as smooth as possible, Rogers agreed to wrestle in tag matches with good friend Johnny Barend. Barend would do all the work and Buddy would come in for two minutes or so a match. The championship match with Bruno on May 17, 1963 at Madison Square Garden took a scant 47 seconds. Rogers showed no offense at all and when lifted into the backbreaker, curled his legs to reduce the pressure.

At this point Rogers was for all intents and purposes retired from the game. He made a brief comeback in 1964 for McMahon and one in 1967 for the Sheik in Detroit. Pictures of Rogers during his Detroit stay showed a man still in the throes of illness and not the picture of health. Rogers stayed retired until 1978 when he surprised everyone by coming out in Florida to wrestle as a babyface. He looked almost like he did in his heyday and told everyone he felt fine. The next year, he went to the Carolinas as a heel manager, managing Ken Patera and "convincing" Jimmy Snuka to turn heel. The highlight of his stay was a series of matches against Ric Flair, the man who has most patterned himself after Rogers.

In 1981, Rogers returned to the WWF, where he hosted an interview segment called "Rogers' Corner." He completed what he started in the Carolinas when he hosted the babyface turn of Jimmy Snuka against Captain Lou Albano. This led to a series of tag matches featuring Rogers and Snuka against Albano and either Ray Stevens or Don Muraco, but before the big match at the Garden, Rogers fell and broke his hip. His lawsuit against the WWF shortly thereafter ended his association with wrestling except for a short stint in 1984 when he opened the Monster Factory with Larry Sharpe. Rogers then retired to Florida for good, attending the occasional convention and appearing on talk shows, but never against stepping foot in the wrestling ring.

How does Rogers stack up against the greats of wrestling? Well he definitely wasn't a wrestler. In a shoot, Thesez would have had little trouble putting him away, and Dick Hutton or Verne Gagne might not have broken a sweat. However, when it came to working, Rogers had no peers. He many have been the best ever at working the crowd. There were few, if any dull spots in a Rogers match. A wrestler is measured by his influence and Rogers was one of the most influential who ever lived. Every bleached blond blowhard owes his style to the Nature Boy, none more so than Flair, who took Rogers' persona, nickname and finishing hold. Flair even took the same crazy bumps Rogers made famous. Brutus Beefcake stole Rogers' strut and forearm pads during his heel tenure. Though imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, none of the imitators, not even Flair, could match the total package. That is what set Rogers apart from the rest.

Letters To The Editors

I really enjoyed the last issue #25 of WP. The article on Eddie Gilbert was "right on the money!" A point that you missed in the article is this: one of Eddie's best friends in the business, Paul E. Dangerously, used to be just like him. Paul settled down and look what it got him - a great paying job. Ivan Koloff was interesting. I liked the interview, but I'm tired of the "old times were better than the new times" bit. I think people need to just accept that wrestling is what it is now - like it or quit watching.

Brian Tramel

Steele, MO

Next Issue...

- Paul on Missy Hyatt.
- Michael McGowen joins the *Wrestling Perspective* family with an article on casual fans.
- The Phantom returns with the first part of an exclusive series on the history of the stereotype in professional wrestling.
- Your letters???
- Plus there's sure to be more so don't miss it!

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